



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

*“Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish,
and Christ is made known to all.”*

February 2023

Dear chair

Welcome back to the second half of the Spring Term. I hope you feel refreshed after the half term break. With spring just around the corner and a glimpse of those first snowdrops, things are looking more positive, but challenges remain.

This twice-termly chairs' mailing is part of our commitment to support you and keep you up-to-date with educational developments and good practice, both locally and nationally.

Diocese of Brentwood News

NEW DATE *Commissioning of Foundation Governors by Bishop Alan*

Foundation Governors have a key role to play in helping the Diocese maintain and develop the Catholic character of our schools and ensuring that the school fulfils its proper, educational role in the life of the community.

This commissioning event at **Thursday 22 June 2022 (18:00 start)** at **The Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, Billericay** will recognise the contribution made by governors in support of Catholic education across the Diocese of Brentwood. This event is for new foundation governors and MAT Trustees as well as those who have been unable to attend a previous commissioning event. Other governors serving in our Catholic schools who would like to attend are also very welcome to attend this unique event.

Governors will be commissioned directly by Bishop Alan, who they represent on governing bodies of Catholic schools. They will also receive a certificate commemorating their commissioning. Following the event, you are warmly invited to join us in the hall for light refreshments.

Please note that Bishop Alan wants to meet and commission all Foundation Governors and MAT Trustees who are currently in post. We look forward to welcoming you.

[To book a place please complete this form.](#)

Updates to Catholic Schools Inspectorate Handbooks for January 2023

Although there is a commitment to producing only one annual update of the Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection documents, for this year only an updated version has been produced to reflect a number of recent significant changes.

The new January versions of the handbooks are loaded to the relevant sections on the CSI website: www.catholicschoolsinspectorate.org.uk

Foundation Governors and Trustees – Important Reminder

Foundation Governors and Trustees must be practising Catholics and are appointed in the name of the Bishop with a legal duty to preserve and develop the Catholic character of the school and to ensure that the school is conducted in accordance with its trust deed.

The position of chair and vice chair **must** be held by a foundation governor. This is an important strategic role in driving school improvement in our Catholic schools.

Please remember that participating in appropriate Catholic governor training is an expectation of all Foundation Governors regardless of length of service and experience. This also applies to Directors/Trustees of academy trusts.

We will be looking for evidence of this before approving the re-appointment of foundation governors - if any governors are not able to provide evidence that they have completed a number of relevant Catholic training courses over the 4 years of their appointment then this is likely to present a barrier for their re-appointment.

For Foundation Governors newly appointed or re-appointed during this academic year, we will be looking at ensuring they have completed at least one BDES Catholic Gift-ED module/training course a year for every year of service – a reasonable level of engagement. If some catching up needs to happen or you need to get started now would be a good time to do this.

We want a well-trained Catholic governor body who will be able to effectively act as representatives of the Bishop. We know from speaking to some of those who have completed the modules that they feel more confident and knowledgeable about the role that they carry out.

For ease of reference, the latest development opportunities for governors are shown under ‘Governor Development’ below or [in the ‘Events’ section of the Diocesan website](#)

Handbook for New Governors

Our new [Handbook for New Governors](#) will give newly appointed governors the key information they need as they grow into the role. Sent automatically to new foundation governors on their appointment, it is useful for all new governors and you are encouraged to share it with any new members of your governing body.

As well as in-school induction, it is important that new governors attend Induction training to gain confidence and knowledge of their role within a Catholic setting. Diocesan Induction training consists of two modules and the expectation is that governors attend both to complete their induction training.

[Details of the next modules](#) can be found in the Events section below.

Governance Information – Close Family Relations

We recognise it is not always easy to appoint Foundation Governors and we are very grateful for the service provided by significant numbers of Catholics across the diocese who take on this important role.

The diocese has not knowingly appointed anyone as a Foundation Governor where we were already aware of close family relationships with members of staff or indeed other family members on the same governing bodies. This has been diocesan policy

and practice since before 2016. What has changed is that we updated the documentation we require governors to complete just prior to COVID. We did this in response to a particular situation we were dealing with at the time. As it happens the specific situation did not relate to close family ties but these are now being flagged up as a consequence of the change to the form as well.

The key point here is that we changed our form not our policy.

We now recognise that there may be examples where some people with close family links have been appointed in the past because we did not ask a question that would require clarity on this point. We are however much more confident that this will not happen in future, unless people deliberately do not declare information. In a scenario like that their position would immediately become untenable. The position we have taken not to appoint people with close family ties to school staff and/or with relatives on the same governing body has also been informed by advice and guidance provided by our diocesan solicitors and the CES.

For those people who have been appointed and have acted in good faith we feel the sensible approach is to review who is appointed, as we would anyway, when they come up for re-appointment. The updated form will now enable us to ensure that we have all the information that we require to make a more informed decision around the appointment of governors. We have also introduced the use of a relatively new nomination form that we are now using for the appointment and approval of all Directors/Trustees of single and multi-academy trusts, so the same will apply here as well. We will also ensure that explicit reference is made to this in the diocesan Protocol.

Looking to the future we realise that it will probably be necessary for the diocesan education service to organise a further recruitment drive in order to identify new and additional people to call on as Foundation Governors to supplement the good people already in post.

Appointment to Reserved Posts in Catholic Schools- Reminders

The Reserved Posts in a Catholic Primary School are Headteacher, Head of School, Deputy Headteacher and RE Subject Leader.

These posts must be filled by '*Practising Catholics in good standing with the Church*'. In schools where there is no Deputy Headteacher (DHT) post, at least one Assistant Headteacher post must be a reserved post and therefore filled by a practicing Catholic.

[The only way this requirement can be verified is through a reference by the priest where the person fulfils their obligation to attend Mass weekly and on Holy Days.](#)

There are also other specific questions asked on the diocesan proforma for this reference. A priest's reference is required for the shortlisting stage as a Practising Catholics in good standing with the Church' is the top criteria for such roles. This is also why there needs to be a minimum of a week between the closing date and shortlisting date-to enable the priest's reference to be received.

Please note that:

- the diocese must be notified as soon as a vacancy for a reserved post arises and **we must be involved at all stages of the process**, most especially at shortlisting and interview

- all DHT and Headteacher/Head of School posts must be advertised nationally
- it is very important that all processes **are and are seen to be: open, transparent, robust, rigorous and fair**. A diocesan adviser on the panel helps to ensure this as well as fulfilling the obligation to have the Bishop represented during the process
- **an outgoing Headteacher cannot be involved in the process of recruiting their successor**. Governing bodies will have the support of the Diocesan Adviser in the recruitment process and may also choose to have an LA or HR Adviser if they wish.

Academy News

Academies' Day & CMAT Development Conference

The Brentwood Diocese is delighted to confirm arrangements for the inaugural Academies' Day and CMAT Development Conference on Friday **21 April 2023** (9:30-15:00) at De la Salle School in Basildon. There is no charge for attending this conference and a light lunch will be provided.

The invitation to attend is extended to all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors (or Vice Chair if they are unable to attend) of all schools in the Diocese - whether your school is a VA school, Single Academy, or part of a Catholic Multi Academy Trust (CMAT).

This is an important opportunity to hear about the successes and challenges from some current CMATs, their journey so far and their plans for the future. There will be an opportunity to share good practice and network with colleagues. For those schools not yet part of a CMAT it will be an opportunity to find out more about and consider ways in which to engage with the Bishop's vision for education in our diocese.

We are pleased to announce that we expect to be joined at the conference by the Regional Director for the East of England Jonathan Duff and the Catholic Education Service who will give key note speeches. Bishop Alan will also be with us to share his own perspectives on the day.

This is a significant opportunity for school leaders and we ask you to prioritise it in your diary. [To book your place](#)

Appointments to Academy Trust Boards (Single and Multi)

Please see the link to the Director/Trustee Nomination Form which must be used by all trusts for appointments and reappointments from Monday 20 February 2023: [DoB Catholic Education Trust – Director Application Nomination Form](#)

Please also remember to send all requests for Governor and Trustee/Director appointments to: governanceappointments@dioceseofbrentwood.org

From Monday 20 February 2023 the old governor nomination form will only be able to be used for the appointment/re-appointment of Foundation Governors in Voluntary Aided Schools or Foundation Governors on Local Governing Bodies in a Multi-Academy Trust. Please note that the appointment of a Foundation Governor or a Director is only effective on receipt of the official letter sent on behalf of the Bishop.

Governor Development

Webinars

NEW: *Creating Good Partnerships with School Leaders*

The success of all governance is dependent on developing strong working relationships. This webinar, run in collaboration with the Diocese of Chelmsford on **Monday 13 March 2023 (15:30-17:00)**, will explore what that might look like in terms of a professional relationship of trust and how a non-confrontational coaching style of questioning will enable good and effective accountability and decision-making.

All governors and trustees are very welcome; especially useful for chairs and headteachers. The link to sign up is here: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

NEW DATE: *Role of Trustees in a Catholic MAT (CMAT)*

This webinar on **21 March 2023 (17:30- 19:00)** is a short course intended for those new to the trustee role within a Catholic MAT (CMAT) or as a refresher for trust boards as part of their ongoing training requirements.

The training will cover:

- What are the basics of good governance?
- How Trust Boards work
- The core functions of a Catholic multi academy trust board

Facilitator: Stephen Adamson, Diocesan MAT Development Officer

[To book your place](#)

NEW DATE: *Safeguarding Children (webinar for school governors)*

The next *Safeguarding Children* update will run as a webinar on **Monday 27 March 2023 (17:30-19:00)** and cover all the essential information needed to understand your statutory responsibilities. It is so important that all governors are aware of their responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding - especially new governors as part of their induction and governors with a lead for monitoring safeguarding in your school. [You can book your place here.](#)

NEW DATE: *Maintaining and Improving the Premises and Sites of Catholic Schools*

Following this popular session last year, a premises webinar has been arranged for **Wednesday 26 April 2023 (17:30-19:00)**. This webinar is particularly useful for chairs and those governors responsible for premises issues, whether in a maintained school or academy. You can [book your place here.](#)

NEW DATES: *Induction - Being an Effective Governor in a Catholic School*

As well as in-school induction, it is important that new governors attend Induction training to gain confidence and knowledge of their role within a Catholic setting.

Diocesan Induction training consists of two modules and the expectation is that governors attend both to complete their induction training:

Module 1: The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Schools – Monday 12 June 2023 (17:00-18:30)

This module explores the distinctive ethos of church schools and the role of governance within a Catholic setting. To [book a place](#)

Module 2: An Introduction to the Roles and Responsibilities of Governors – Monday 3 July 2023 (17:00-18:30)

This module will help governors gain confidence and knowledge of the 3 core functions of governance and share good practice To [book a place](#)

Face-to-Face Training

Academies' Day & CMAT Development Conference

As mentioned above, the inaugural Academies' Day and CMAT Development Conference is taking place on Friday **21 April 2023** (9:30-15:00) at De la Salle School in Basildon. This is for all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors (or Vice Chair if they are unable to attend) of all schools in the Diocese - whether your school is a VA school, Single Academy, or part of a Catholic Multi Academy Trust (CMAT).

[To book your place](#)

Clerks' Conference (Essex Clerks' Association)

The annual ECA Clerks' Conference has been arranged for **Thursday 11 May 2023** (9:00-13:30) at the JobServe Community Stadium, Colchester. Lunch is included. This is a free event for clerks working in Essex, Southend and Thurrock schools.

The keynote speaker will be Amy Wright, Clerking Development Manager at the NGA and there will be a choice of 3 workshops. To reserve your place please send an email to bookings@essexclerks.org

Online Learning

Gift-ED

Informative and easy to follow, our library of online courses are designed to support governors in our Catholic schools in their role. This training is currently FREE and can be completed using multiple devices in short bite-sized chunks.

I am delighted to see that there are currently 206 active learners on Gift-ED and 189 courses have been completed.

These are the modules currently available:

- Faithful Governance (for new and re-appointed governors/directors)
- Engaging with parents
- Preparing for Ofsted
- Curriculum for governors
- Appointing the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher
- Appointing Heads of RE
- Headteacher Appraisal (for members of the headteacher appraisal panel)

Each school has been allocated at least 5 Gift-ED licences. To request access to the Gift ED library of online courses for your governors, please advise us [by using this link](#)

Governor Recruitment

Foundation governor vacancies are advertised through the Diocesan website. We also work with local parishes, *Inspiring Governance* and *Governors for Schools* to look for suitable governors for our schools.

We have asked clerks to advise us of [foundation governor vacancies](#) but if your school is not shown and you need support in filling a foundation governor vacancy please get in touch (debbibotham@dioceseofbrentwood.org).

Schools looking to recruit Foundation Governors may also be interested in [our flyer](#) to distribute to parents and the local Catholic community. [Get in touch](#) if you would like a word version so you can adapt the flyer for your school.

Safeguarding Update

All schools to receive defibrillators by the end of the school year

[DfE has confirmed that all state-funded schools in England currently without a defibrillator to receive one by the end of the academic year](#)

Described as a huge milestone by the Education Secretary, the rollout will supply over 20,000 defibrillators to nearly 18,000 schools. To give schools the tools and knowledge they need to use their new defibrillators including how to make them available to the community, the Oliver King Foundation and other leading charities have supported the creation of updated [guidance](#). Awareness videos are being provided to show how simple defibrillators are to use, and schools are being encouraged to share these videos in staff meetings and assemblies.

Safeguarding Checklist

Safeguarding should be the number one priority for all schools.

How confident are governors that the school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding? Our [Safeguarding checklist](#) covers the essential questions for a governor or trustee to ask.

Asbestos Management

The diocese has been working with Airborne Environmental Consultants (AEC) to review the management of asbestos in our diocesan schools.

AEC have helped the diocese write a template asbestos management plan for all diocesan schools. Each school will receive a copy of this document this month and must strongly consider using it unless they are satisfied with their current arrangements.

AEC will offer to visit schools to review the school's asbestos procedures and documentation and give advice. This service will be free of charge. It is important that the school has identified the duty holder, the responsible person and other staff that have a role in managing asbestos. These staff require regular asbestos training which AEC will be able to help schools arrange (AEC training courses are affordable). The Diocese is running free online asbestos training hosted by AEC on [23 February](#), [13 June](#), [26 September](#). Aimed at headteachers and responsible persons, it is compulsory that each school sends a representative to one of these courses – so please ensure your school is aware.

Asbestos surveys need regular re-inspections, contractor sign-off sheets need to be signed and dated by all consultants and contractors likely to be working on the school buildings. The HSE is making visits to schools and if they find issues, schools can be fined.

David Gatheral, the Diocese Education Service School Building Officer will be able to provide schools and their governors with advice. He can be contacted on davidgatheral@dioceseofbrentwood.org.

Ofsted News

Emerging picture from recent inspections

Ofsted's data on school inspections carried out up to the end of December 2022 [show a continuing trend of improvement since the pandemic](#) with more schools now rated good or outstanding.

Are you expecting the Ofsted phone Call?

Although there is no 'one size fits all' checklist of questions the inspectors will ask governors, [our guidance outlines the key areas that will help you prepare for Ofsted](#).

DfE News

New national plan for music education

Governing bodies have an important role in ensuring their school offers pupils a broad and balanced curriculum and DfE has recently published a new [national plan for music education](#). This sets out what their vision for of high-quality music in schools with music valued and celebrated to 'enable all children and young people to learn to sing, play an instrument and create music together'

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

DfE has published a document [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#), which builds on the [Working together to improve school attendance guidance](#). The guidance makes clear the expectations placed on school staff as well as academy trustees/governing bodies, parents/carers and Local Authorities (LAs) where there is a pupil experiencing social, emotional or mental health issues that are affecting attendance and gives examples of good practice.

School Food Standards – Guidance for Governing Bodies

The governing body are responsible for the provision of school food and play a crucial role in creating and embedding a great school food culture. It is the statutory responsibility of the governing body and trustees to ensure the [School Food Standards](#) are being met.

[DfE has published guidance for governing bodies](#) recommending that they work with the senior leadership team to develop a whole school food policy that sets out the school's approach to its provision of food, food education, the role of the catering team as part of the wider school team and the school's strategy to increase the take-up of school lunches.

Latest Research

Flexible working in schools

New research has been published on [Flexible working in schools](#) exploring the costs and benefits associated with implementing flexible working in schools. One of the key findings indicates that the benefits of flexible working are generally seen to outweigh the costs and help to retain good staff and improve teacher wellbeing.

Governing bodies have an important role to play in establishing a culture inclusive of flexible working as well as in implementing strategies and initiatives that reduce excessive workload demands.

State of the nation 2022: children and young people's wellbeing


This [annual report](#), commissioned by DfE, collates and analyses published evidence about the wellbeing of children and young people and presents a mixed picture as to the current state of children and young people's wellbeing during the 2021/22 academic year.

Although there are signs of recovery and positive outcomes, especially participation in extra-curricular activities, obesity and physical activity levels other measures indicate sustained poorer outcomes. These include mental health problems, (especially for older young people) and feelings of anxiousness. While the data cannot tell us about the causes, there are indications that a range of emerging or continuing national and global issues may be causing worries and challenges for children and young people. These include worries about cost of living, the environment and wider social issues and inequalities, and negative experiences using social media.

Annual report - parent views of their child's education

Parentkind's latest Parent Voice Survey [report](#) finds that the relationship between parents and schools has never been so important. The report reveals that despite parents' willingness to support their child's learning, there is more to do for schools to communicate how parents might best play a role in learning at home. Other focuses of the report surround the wider community, pupil mental health and wellbeing and the cost of living crisis.

Governing bodies should look to engage with stakeholders to support strategic planning and decision-making but key findings reveal that only half of parents agree that their child's school takes actions based on their views and only 48% feel they are able to have a say on school decisions that affect their child's education.

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|  | <p>Reflect: When did you last review arrangements for communicating with parents and carers? How well does the school involve parents and carers in school life to help them support their children at school?</p> <p>Our Gift-ED <i>Engaging with Parents</i> online course, suitable for all governors, will provide governing bodies with ideas and strategies to improve parental engagement.</p> |
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Thank you for all that you do for your school.

Debbi Botham
Diocesan Governance Development Officer

Diocesan communications are issued solely to support you to carry out your education functions as a Catholic school leader on behalf of your diocesan bishop. They may contain sensitive information and must be respected as private communications and not be shared with any third parties external to the diocese without written BDES consent.